

## **EXHIBIT 14**

Hopkinton School  
District May 6, 2021  
Opposition to Divisive  
Concepts Language in  
HB2



HOPKINTON SCHOOL DISTRICT  
School Administrative Unit 66

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*Above All, Care*

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May 6, 2021

Hon. Gary Daniels  
Chair, Senate Finance Committee  
Concord, NH 03301

**RE: Propagation of Divisive Concepts Prohibited Language in HB 2**

Dear Senator Daniels and members of the Senate Finance Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on language contained within the House passed state budget. The Hopkinton School Board met on May 6<sup>th</sup> and voted unanimously to register its strong opposition to the embedding of the language in what was HB 544 into the state budget currently being discussed in the Senate Finance Committee.

The Hopkinton School Board agrees with Governor Sununu's stated position that he would likely veto such legislation, as he believes that it infringes on the free speech of NH citizens. Further, because the HB 544 language is a close model of President Donald Trump's Executive Order 13590, which was struck down in the courts for constitutional violations; and because it is already opposed by numerous prominent NH businesses, organizations, and civil rights groups; it can be expected that such language in the NH budget would be subject to numerous court challenges, with the NH taxpayers footing the legal bills.

Pedagogically, the passage of the current HB 544 language would restrict local control of education and be a hindrance to the proper education of our students.

The mission of the Hopkinton School District is "Above All Care." Earlier this school year, the Hopkinton School Board passed an updated anti-discrimination policy and plan. We are committed to preventing discrimination by working with students, staff, and families to create an educational and working environment supportive of our diverse school community; by reflecting upon and updating our pedagogy, curriculum, and traditions; and by proactively intervening, responding to and speaking out against discrimination in our community.

Like many school districts and businesses across the state, we are very concerned that our efforts to advance the important work of diversity, equity, inclusion and justice would be undermined by the limitations imposed by the inclusion of this language in the state budget.

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If passed, the language contained in the House budget proposal would fundamentally take away decision making authority on important educational matters and personnel management from the Hopkinton School Board. New Hampshire has traditionally prided itself on a tradition of allowing school districts the latitude to make decisions and set priorities deemed in the best interest of their staff, students and communities. As local elected officials, we take this responsibility seriously – actively engaging with students, families and the greater Hopkinton community to deliver an education that reflects the values of our community. The language contained in the House passed budget seeks to undermine this tradition and make unlawful certain conversations about race, gender and privilege that some members of the Legislature find offensive. We strongly believe that this is the wrong approach.

Aside from political ideology, we fail to understand why the Legislature would undertake this unprecedented action to censor local school districts. It is striking that the House, rather than focus on providing students and communities with the resources needed to provide an adequate education, or address the educational funding gap associated with COVID-19, has instead used the budget process to interfere with local control of education and free speech. We hope that the Senate Finance Committee will use its budget process to focus on providing resources to support student learning and provide local property tax relief, rather than fighting a fictitious culture war – our students and communities deserve better.

Our sincere hope is that rather than use the state budget process to censor certain discussions within our schools, we can instead support the efforts of local decision makers to provide students with the critical thinking skills they need to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important issue.

On behalf of the Hopkinton School Board,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jim O'Brien', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jim O'Brien, Chair  
jobrien@sau66.org